

HOUSE BILL 2284

By Jones

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 3;
Title 37 and Title 68, relative to the select
committee on children and youth.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 3, Chapter 15, is amended by adding
the following as a new part:

3-15-201.

(a)

(1) There is created the select committee on children and youth. The select committee shall consist of eighteen (18) members. Nine (9) senators shall be appointed by the speaker of the senate, and nine (9) representatives shall be appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives.

(2) The members appointed shall have a desire to serve on the committee and be committed to improving the lives of Tennessee's children by making "the best interests of each child" their primary focus.

(3) During the organizational session of each general assembly, the respective speakers shall reappoint or appoint members to serve on the select committee on children and youth. Any vacancies occurring on the select committee, between organizational sessions, shall be filled by the respective speakers in accordance with subdivision (a)(1).

(b)

(1) The select committee shall meet at least eight (8) times per year and at the call of the chair. Each member of the committee shall be entitled to

expenses in accordance with § 3-1-106, for each day the member attends a meeting of the committee; provided, that no member shall receive additional legislative compensation when the general assembly is in session or if a member is being paid any other payments on the same dates for attendance on other state business.

(2) The committee shall elect from its membership a chair, a vice chair, and other officers as it deems necessary.

3-15-202.

The select committee on children and youth is authorized to:

(1) Create subcommittees related to its purposes;

(2) Request standing committees of the general assembly, the fiscal review committee, and any agencies or entities of state government to study and report on designated policy matters relating to children and youth;

(3) Conduct meetings and public hearings in Nashville and across the state as shall be necessary;

(4) Employ committee staff, including an executive director, subject to the availability of funding for such purpose. The executive director shall have experience in the fields of social services and child welfare, and as an executive director of an entity that provides social services or child welfare.

(5) Enter into contracts for technical or professional services, subject to the availability of funding for such purposes, with the speaker of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives to jointly:

(A) Determine the qualifications and task or job descriptions of any consultant or other person contracted for services; and

(B) Select the consultant or other person on behalf of the committee;

(6) Promote interagency cooperation and policy continuity with respect to state initiatives to benefit children and youth;

(7) Provide, on behalf of the general assembly, planning and programmatic assistance to legislative conferences on children and youth, when needed;

(8) Undertake appropriate actions to inform state and local officials, and the public at large, of innovative and effective model programs for children, youth, and their families; and

(9) Perform other duties as requested by joint resolution of the general assembly.

3-15-203.

The select committee on children and youth shall timely publish a report following the conclusion of every regular annual legislative session occurring in an even-numbered year that summarizes the committee's activities, findings, recommendations, and proposals. A copy of the annual report shall be distributed to each member of the general assembly.

3-15-204.

It is the duty of the select committee on children and youth to:

(1) Review current state policies on children and youth as reflected by Tennessee statutes, regulations, programs, services, and budgetary priorities, and to provide oversight;

(2) Study the problems that jeopardize the development and well-being of Tennessee children and youth including, but not limited to, such persistent, interdisciplinary problems as teen pregnancy, educational underachievement, youth employment, alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency, emotional illness, birth defects, day care, homelessness, child abuse, the growing impoverishment of children and adolescents, child sexual abuse, and human trafficking of minors;

(3) Define and establish the components, guidelines, and objectives of a comprehensive state policy to ensure and promote present and future health, welfare, and opportunity for Tennessee's children and youth;

(4) Identify any Tennessee statutes, regulations, programs, services, and budgetary priorities that conflict with the components, guidelines, and objectives of the comprehensive state policy;

(5) Search for any interdepartmental gaps, inconsistencies, and inefficiencies in the implementation or attainment of the comprehensive state policy;

(6) Identify any new laws, regulations, programs, services, and budgetary priorities necessary to ensure and promote the:

(A) Present and future health of the children and youth in this state, including their physical, mental, and emotional health;

(B) Welfare of our children and youth; and

(C) Opportunities for children and youth in this state;

(7) Serve as an in-house informational resource for all members and committees of the general assembly on legislative policy matters concerning children and youth; and

(8) Perform other activities reasonably related to the legislative intent of this part including, but not necessarily limited to, improving public awareness of the special needs of children and youth in Tennessee.

3-15-205.

(a) Upon completion of its duties as prescribed by this part, the select committee on children and youth shall prepare and publish a final report on its activities, including, but not limited to, its duties, committee responsibilities, accomplishments, and

recommendations for legislation. The committee shall distribute the final report to each member of the general assembly and to each library officially designated as a depository for state documents and publications.

(b) The committee shall terminate and cease to exist upon the distribution of the final report.

3-15-206.

(a) Until the select committee on children and youth terminates pursuant to § 3-15-205, the commissioner of education shall report at least twice each year to the select committee on the department of education's performance of its statutory duties and responsibilities, including, but not limited to, the extent of funding available for a dropout prevention program pursuant to § 49-1-520.

(b) Until such time as the select committee terminates, the commissioner of children's services shall report at least three (3) times each year to the select committee, and as may be called upon by the committee, on the performance of the department of children's services' statutory duties and responsibilities.

3-15-207.

The select committee on children and youth shall perform legislative oversight of programs and services for children and their families as provided in this part. This section shall not prohibit or restrict appropriate review, inquiry, or oversight of the department of children's services by any other standing, special, or statutory committee of the general assembly.

3-15-208.

The select committee on children and youth shall study all relevant issues pertaining to the child protective services system in this state, including, but not limited to, its effectiveness, and develop recommendations for its improvement.

3-15-209.

The committee shall receive information and assistance from the commission on children and youth, department of children's services, department of education, and other agencies of state government, upon the committee's request.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.